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Prof. W. T. Hewett, of Cornell University, moved that the report be accepted and the articles be discussed in detail. This motion was carried, and after some little explanation and discussion, the articles were adopted, each severally, and the Committee was continued, to suggest at a future sitting names of members for an Executive Council of the Association. The Conference then proceeded to the regular business of the session, the reading of papers, after having adopted the five-minute rule for discussion. Dr. J. W. Bright, of the Johns Hopkins University, read a communication,

5. "On Some Aspects of the Modern Language Question."

The aim of this paper was to present a few jottings upon this question, which might suggest the importance of having more regard to certain of its phases than would seem to be the fashion.

It is unfair to the classical studies to measure their educational value by the beggarly results of this course produced by the great majority of American Colleges. The average of classical scholarship among us has fallen too low to furnish a just basis of reference: this factor of deterioration must not be neglected in the problem.

So, too, the significance of Modern Language study calls for just definition. In the ardor of enthusiasm its advocates will do well to give themselves somewhat to balanced reflection; the details of the question have been left too vague; subsidiary considerations have been exalted into essentials, and the cause has been weakened by the failure to discriminate between concessions made to this department of study in behalf of the natural sciences, and such as contribute to the substantial advancement of the department itself.

The process of attaining the ends for which this Association has been formed, will necessarily be a slow one. Strong prejudices and dear delusions are involved in the changes proposed; the teaching profession no less than the public must be schooled into an understanding of what is intended.

There must be no wholesale importation of foreign methods; all changes must be organic, in keeping with the spirit and needs of our own American Society.

Men of the highest educational authority are yet to be brought to a just recognition of this department of study.

The notorious indifference of English-speaking people to sound scholarship in the Modern Languages is difficult of explanation. One of the causes underlying this state of things, the writer believes to be the English proclivity and felicity in popularizing the facts of science. In the case of English philology we have been in the paradoxical position of popularizing a science before possessing the science itself.

We have sufficiently demonstrated how slowly dilettanteism furthers sound knowledge. Treatises on the English language, and annotations to English classics, differ little in the extent and the degree of absurdity from the earliest attempts at an explanation of the facts of the history and growth of the language.

This wide-reaching question involves the short-comings of those who represent Modern Languages in our institutions, and the interrelation of our institutions themselves. The system of elective courses is extending the upward reach of the College. By reason of the advanced age of college-men their course of study must do more than merely fit them for the professional schools, and the University; it must also equip many for the immediate entrance upon the practical duties of the teacher's career, and for that of other literary and scientific vocations. A corresponding differentiation of the functions of the College has, therefore, become a practical issue.

The danger of too early specialization is to be guarded against; but more especially do we need to check the evil consequences of loose and general scholarship. General culture is open to the charge of having been too general, and against this defect elective courses as now in operation in several of our most progressive institutions, is wisely directed.

Specialization is a natural and indispensable means in education, and to its rightful employment we look for the redemption of American scholarship. That a College graduate know a little of all possible subjects, will no longer suffice; in addition to the general information that marks the educated man, he must know a subject or two reasonably well. The old *curriculum* has been described as a "uniform grind for the lower classes, and a jumble of all manner of sciences in the upper." The "jumble" can at least be simplified; the greater maturity of the Junior and the Senior can be recognized; they can more and more be taken into the helpful confidence of their instructors, and the spirit of true learning and sound acquisition be more and more engendered in them.

A concluding word with more special reference to English, was added. Everybody, unfortunately, knows all about English, and so by reason of preconceived notions, there is no subject upon which it is less easy to obtain a candid hearing. Fortunately, however, the fashion has been set to "recognize" and to be "interested" in English as an important branch of study, and so the time seems to have come for those who have the matter at heart to prove the merits of their cause. No institution in our country has yet established a complete course in English. In the individual attempts that may be made to heighten the character of work in English, cardinal faults of method are to be guarded against. A common error is to attempt to teach the facts of the language in violation of the historic order. A comparatively modern author, for example, is read, and to counteract

the fatal facility with which the student is able to read the text, it is made the occasion of a course in Anglo-Saxon equivalents, and Sanskrit "roots," of both of which the student has no direct knowledge; this is done to make the subject "hard" and disciplinary, and is called "scientific English." By such a method no correct knowledge of the language, as in itself an object of study, can be imparted, and the artistic sense in literary judgment is left undeveloped, or is, perhaps, permanently impaired.

This paper was favorably commented on by Prof. F. A. March, of Lafayette College, Pa., after which Prof. H. C. G. Brandt, of Hamilton College, New York, presented a communication:—

6. "On the Embodiment of the latest Results of Research in Text Books, and the Necessity of a Scientific Basis for Instruction."

There is a prejudice against the study of Modern Languages, and in favor of that of the Ancient Languages. Compare Modern and Ancient History. "*Das Jahr übt eine heiligende Kraft.*" "Philology" in Germany and England means Classical Philology, at least in the eyes of the classical philologists. Also, in other quarters, the philology of living languages is denied the rank and dignity of a science, hardly worthy of serious pursuit by student and investigator. German and French can be picked up anywhere, and at any time, while the student is devoting himself to the more serious and difficult studies of Mathematics, Greek, Latin, Natural Science, and Philosophy.

The traveller abroad, the merchant, the professional man, and the student in other departments of knowledge take the utilitarian view of our department, and care not how they learn French or German, scientifically or otherwise. Even Instructors in Modern Languages do not realize that their department is a science. They satisfy the utilitarian demands by some method or other.

But admitting that our department labors under serious disadvantages, we need not stop to prove that we have a science, to any one who knows what valuable contributions to the Science of Language have been made in the field of modern philology, by such men as Grimm, Scherer, ten Brink, Sievers, Paul, Braune, Sweet, Skeat, Kluge, to mention only "*Germanisten.*" Sievers' and Sweet's work in Phonetics, and Paul's *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte*, were instanced.

Our department having a science, we must insist upon it that all teaching should start from a strictly scientific basis, and all the aids in teaching, text-books, reference books, etc., should be constructed upon such a basis. Why?